Cooking with Leuvis

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/36765322.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Categories:	F/M, M/M, Multi
Fandoms:	Hannibal (TV), 約束のネバーランド | Yakusoku no Neverland | The Promised Neverland (Manga)
Relationships:	Matthew Brown/Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter/Leuvis | Lewis, Matthew Brown/Will Graham/Molly Graham, Hannibal Lecter/Will Graham
Characters:	Matthew Brown (Hannibal), Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Leuvis | Lewis (The Promised Neverland), Molly Graham
Additional Tags:	Crack Treated Seriously, Crossovers & Fandom Fusions, Cannibalism, Infidelity, Canon Compliant (Threat), Pre-Canon (for The Promised Neverland), Post-Canon (for Hannibal), Unhealthy Relationships, Bittersweet Ending, I ship them as a divorced couple Your Honor, Evisceration is not a love language Hannibal!, Remember Will's wife? It's okay; neither does Will.
Language:	English
Collections:	Griselda Gimpel's Skewed Fics, Griselda Gimpel's Charming Crossovers, Selected Works, Best Will Graham x Matthew Brown Fics, Nothing to See Here
Stats:	Published: 2022-01-30 Completed: 2022-03-13 Words: 9,845 Chapters: 7/7

Cooking with Leuvis

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Summary

Will takes Hannibal over the cliff side, but they never hit the bottom.

Elsewhere in the demon world, Archduke Leuvis investigates a distortion in the fabric that separates the demon world from the human world.

Complete!

Notes

If you're coming from the Hannibal fandom and aren't familiar with The Promised Neverland, it involves demons who eat people. That's pretty much all you need to know for this fan fic.

If you're coming from the Promised Neverland fandom and aren't familiar with Hannibal, it's about an FBI profiler (Will) and a debonair cannibalistic serial-killer (Hannibal) who fall in love with each other...and then fall off a cliff together. Matthew Brown is an orderly who's also in love with Will and tried to murder Hannibal on his behalf.

Chapter 1

Matthew Brown smiled as he completed his final check in with his parole officer. It had been four years since his initial arrest. He'd never stood trial. Trials were expensive, and the state didn't want a media circus. The death of the Bailiff was believed in the eyes of the law to have been committed by Dr. Hannibal Lecter. The charge Matthew had initially faced was attempted murder. However, the victim in that case was the same Dr. Lecter, and when his horrific crimes came to light, well, Matthew's trial would have been a media circus.

He pled down to an assault and battery charge. That saved the state money, and it meant that they didn't have angry citizens demanding that Matthew be given a medal for his attempting to do Hannibal in. The sentencing judge was lenient with him, given that it was a first-time offense. He only got a few years. After a year, he was released early on parole for good behavior.

Matthew whistled as he left his parole officer's office. He stopped by the barbers to get a haircut and then by the pet store to get doggie treats. Will Graham loved dogs.

It had taken him some time to find Will's current address, and he drove there the next day, the doggie treats on the seat next to him. He heard the barking as soon as he parked.

The door was open by a woman with a boy half-hiding behind her. Matthew regarded her curiously. The dogs continued to bark. Matthew was going to have to let them get his scent soon.

"Can I help you?" the woman asked.

Matthew waved as he came closer, holding the doggie treats under his other arm. "My name's Matthew Brown. I'm looking for Will Graham. Does he still live here?"

The woman nodded. "I'm his wife. Molly. This is Walter."

"His wife?" Matthew repeated, turning the word over in his mouth distastefully, trying to absorb this new information.

"I don't remember you from the wedding," Molly said, and there was a hint of nervousness creeping into her voice. He realized this wasn't a situation either of them had expected. That settled things in Matthew's mind. He held out the doggie treats as a peace offering.

"It's okay," he assured her. "I'm not the jealous type."

Molly turned to her son. "Sweetie, why don't you go up to your room?" The boy nodded and then disappeared. The dogs rushed through the gap that was left, and Matthew was prodded all around by noses. He opened up the box and began passing out the treats.

"How do you know my husband?" Molly asked warily.

"I was his *friend* when he was incarcerated."

"His *friend*?" Molly echoed. Matthew could tell that she was turning over the emphasis on the word in her mind.

"Like I said," Matthew repeated, "I'm not the jealous type."

"Why now?" Molly asked. Then she realized what she'd said. "Never mind. That was a stupid question. Sorry, it's just that Will didn't mention you."

"Oh."

"What were you in for? Unless, sorry, is that rude?"

"No," Matthew told her. "We should get to know each other. I was convicted of assault and battery for trying to kill Dr. Hannibal Lecter."

Molly gave a small, involuntary laugh and then the tension in her shoulders relaxed. "State should have given you a medal for that, not jail time. Come inside."

"Is Will here?"

Molly shook her head. "No, he's out of town. He's going to be away for a while. It's related to a case."

Inside the house, Molly set the kettle on the stove and dug tea bags from the pantry. The dogs continue to circle Matthew, sniffing him and occasionally barking. He gave them affection pats. He could learn to love dogs just like he could learn to love Molly.

When the tea was ready, Molly poured two cups and joined Matthew at the kitchen table.

"He doesn't talk about it much, you know," she said. "His bisexuality."

"I saw the headline that woman wrote," Matthew said distastefully. "Murder husbands indeed! Hannibal Lecter doesn't deserve him."

"I don't think Will's had many relationships," Molly said. "That can make it hard sometimes."

"Well, I won't eviscerate him," Matthew promised.

"Fundamental in a relationship," Molly agreed. Then she regarded Matthew seriously. "You can't just walk back in his life. You know that, right?"

Matthew nodded. "We need to sit down, the three of us." He reached out and laid a hand on Molly's, not in an overture of romance but in camaraderie. "But now that I know he has a wife now, the first thing I want to do is get to know you. Who's this woman who stole Will's heart while I was behind bars?"

Molly laughed. “I suppose I had an unfair advantage.”

“It’s my fault for getting caught,” Matthew lamented. She laughed at his joke, and he smiled. Yes, this could work.

Elsewhere, far elsewhere in the demon realm, Archduke Leuvis picked at his dish. It was bland and utterly tasteless to his tongue. It was advertised as high quality, and he understood why that was said, but eating it brought him no joy. The Promise kept him well fed, but it stopped him from his greatest desires.

He needed to clear his head. Leaving his estate, he walked into the forest, following the river. Maybe getting away from prepackaged meals for a bit would help him get his bearings.

Finding Will proved to be a more difficult task that Matthew had reckoned with. Just as he had almost gotten through with a clerk at the FBI about getting in contact with Will, Molly and Walter were attacked by the Great Red Dragon. Matthew had thought he might run into him at the hospital when he went to visit her – although even he recognized that this was not the situation for the sit down he wanted – but it turned out he had just missed him.

Then Hannibal Lecter escaped custody, with Will disappearing with him. Finding them wasn’t easy. Getting onto Hannibal Lecter’s cliff-side property wasn’t easy, either.

He repositioned his pack as he rounded the corner of the house. Maryland law prevented him from owning a firearm, but he had a knife gripped in his hand. In his pack was some rope (which he’d had to use to get onto the property), a first aid kit (in case Will had been injured in his abduction), water, and some energy bars. In his pocket was garroting wire.

When he finally laid his eyes on Will, he was standing at the edge of the cliff, embracing Hannibal. There was someone dead on the ground (but it wasn’t Will, so Matthew didn’t care). Neither Will nor Hannibal were looking at him. He opened his mouth to call out to them, but before he could speak, he watched in horror as Will took Hannibal over the side of the cliff.

Leuvis could tell something was wrong as he strolled through the forest. He was three days walk from his estate, and although he feared nothing in the forest, something was making the metaphorical hairs on the back of his neck stand up. The wind whistled through the trees and jostled his hat.

He sensed something strange. Looking up, he saw a tear in reality above him and not that far off to the side. His mouth opened in surprise. The tear disappeared and the reappeared, this time closer to the canopy of the trees. The next time it disappeared, it reappeared so low that he could only just barely make it out.

Matthew dashed to the edge and peered over. He did not see Will and Hannibal, but they were not dashed on the rocks nor floating in the water. As his eyes searched desperately for Will, there was something – some kind of distortion – that opened up in the air. He realized that they must have fallen through it as it disappeared, only to reappear a moment later, a few feet higher up in the air.

He watched it flicker in and out of existence, this wormhole to somewhere. Then he jumped off the cliff. The gap closed as he fell and then reopened just as he reached its new spot in his descent.

All of a sudden, he wasn't falling through the air over the side of a cliff at all. He was falling only a short distance to the ground.

Chapter 2

Passing through the portal was like going through molasses, and it sapped Matthew's momentum. When he came out the other side, he was falling less than ten feet onto the soft ground of a primordial forest. He bent his knees and rolled. Springing up, he looked around for Will. It was twilight instead of night on the other side of the portal, and there was still some light to see by.

He spotted him off to his left. He was still clinging to Hannibal. It looked like they'd hit the ground and rolled. They were also both covered in blood. Clipping his knife to his belt, Matthew dashed over to Will, gently prying him out of Hannibal's grasp and looking him over for injuries. He had several and was bleeding profusely.

Matthew thanked his past self for having had to foresight to bring a first aid kit. Tearing it open, he began applying disinfectants, gauzes, and bandages to Will's injuries.

"Matthew?" Will asked hazily.

"I'm here," Matthew told him as he finished treating the last wound. "Just lie still."

He heard a stirring sound and looked to see Hannibal pulling himself into a sitting position.

"Mind if I make use of that?" Hannibal asked.

Matthew slipped his hand into his pocket and pulled out the garroting wire, but Will placed a weak hand on his.

"Don't," Will said.

Matthew shot Hannibal a contemptuous look and then said, "Fine." He'd seen the way Will and Hannibal had been embracing. He certainly had opinions about THAT, but it was like he'd told Molly; it would do no good to act the jealous type. That would just make Will hate him.

Will sat up, and Matthew put a hand against the center of his back to steady him.

"What happened and where are we?"

"We went through a portal. I don't know where we ended up."

"And what are you doing here?" Hannibal inquired.

"I was rescuing Will from *you*," Matthew said. "I went through the portal after him."

"I'm not the one responsible for Will's injuries," Hannibal said.

“Not these,” Will added.

“But he is injured,” Matthew retorted.

“A fight with a dragon,” Hannibal explained. “Our combined strength prevailed.”

“We need to get out of here,” Will said. He looked up, but the portal that had been winking in and out of existence was now gone. “I’m going to look around.”

Leuvis stalked through the underbrush to where he had last seen the portal. The wind shifted, and he caught the scent of blood. Human blood.

He circled the final tree, and a human stood before him. The human saw him approach, but to Leuvis’ amazement, he did not react with fear. Leuvis came closer. He could have struck, but he was fascinated. This man was not a member of the Ratri Clan, protected from being on the menu. This was a stranger – an adult, even – who regarded him with no fear, only curiosity. Was he from the human world? If so, why did he not fear him? He must be an escapee from one of the farms who had survived this long on his own. And if he had this little fear of Leuvis, he must be a worthy opponent indeed.

“What are you supposed to symbolize?” Will mused, staring at the monster with elongated limbs that faced him. “Hannibal doesn’t wear hats.”

Leuvis pulled back in surprise, a hand instinctively going to the floppy hat he wore. “Do you think that you could have imagined me, human man?”

“I’ve imagined worse horrors than you,” Will replied calmly. “It’s a nice hat, by the way.”

Hannibal had just finished bandaging his own injuries when suddenly his nose twitched, and he suddenly put a finger to his lips. Matthew looked at him curiously. He didn’t hear anything.

Before Matthew could react, Hannibal snatched the knife from Matthew’s side and slipped off into the forest in the direction that Will had gone. Matthew tossed the first aid kit (now much depleted) back in his pack and then followed him.

“You have not imagined me,” Leuvis said. Will gave no reaction to this. “You do not believe me?”

“If I have imagined you,” Will pointed out, “I can just have easily imagined your denial, just as I’m imagining this conversation.”

“I will show you,” Leuvis said. He reached out a hand and grasped Will’s arm.

Leuvis never heard the arrival of Hannibal. He only felt the bite of the blade as the hand grasping Will was severed from his arm. Leuvis stepped back.

"Well, you're new," Hannibal remarked, placing himself between Will and Leuvis.

"And stronger than you," Leuvis boasted. He flicked his wrist, and his hand grew anew.

"Well, this has possibilities," Hannibal muttered, which was not the response Leuvis was expecting. Before he could dwell on this, however, Matthew jumped on him from behind. Leuvis was surprised. He hadn't detected his arrival at all. Before Leuvis could dislodge him, he'd slipped garroting wire around his throat.

"You can regenerate a hand," Matthew whispered, clinging to Leuvis' back with the strength of his knees alone. "Can you regenerate a head? Do you need to breathe?"

"He's real," Will said. He regarded Leuvis. "What are you?"

Leuvis answered, "I am Leuvis, archduke and brother of Queen Legravalima."

"Well met, Your Royal Highness," Hannibal said. "I am Hannibal. This is Will."

"Who's the one on my back?"

"Dinner," Hannibal quipped.

"Matthew," Matthew corrected with a scowl. "Will, there's rope in my pack. Want to tie this monster up?"

Nodding, Will circled around behind Leuvis, opened Matthew's pack, and pulled out the rope.

"Do you feel pain, Your Royal Highness?" Hannibal asked Leuvis. "If you do, I'd advise you to cooperate." He held the knife out in a pointed threat.

"I thought dukes were 'Your Grace'," Matthew remarked as Will carefully bound Leuvis' hands behind his back. Because Matthew was on Leuvis' back, this meant that Will was tying the knot underneath Matthew's rear. Matthew tried not to twitch too much as Will did that, reminding himself that he needed to keep a grip on the garrot wire. Will continued the binding by sliding the rope between Matthew's chest and Leuvis' back and around his chest so that Leuvis would not be able to lunge forward with his teeth.

"He'd only be a 'Your Grace' if he was a regular duke; he's an archduke. Throw the end over that tree branch," Hannibal instructed. When Will did so, Hannibal grabbed the other end and pulled it. Seeing his intentions, Will joined Hannibal, and between the two of them, they lifted Leuvis (with Matthew still on his back) until his feet were off the ground. Then they tied the rope to an exposed tree root. Matthew let go, dropping to the ground. He backed away, and Leuvis was left dangling.

"Now that you've got me," Leuvis asked, "what do you intend to do with me?"

Hannibal stepped forward, the knife held loosely at his side. “I’d be honored if you’d join us for dinner, Your Royal Highness.”

Chapter 3

"What shall we be dining on?" Leuvis asked from where he hung.

Hannibal inclined his head at Matthew. Leuvis twisted in the ropes to follow his gaze. Matthew shifted his grip on the garroting wire. Hannibal still held his knife. He could run, but that would mean leaving Will in Hannibal's grasp.

Will laid a hand on Hannibal's chest, as if to hold him back from moving forward. Matthew had a momentary lapse in his vow not to be the jealous type.

"We need him," Will said softly.

"Yes," Hannibal agreed. "He will provide excellent sustenance."

Leuvis looked at Hannibal curiously but held his peace. These humans were beginning to interest him.

"He's the only one of us that's not injured," Will said. He nodded his head at Leuvis. "Besides, we've already got meat."

"Very well," Hannibal said. Bending down, he picked up Leuvis' severed hand and tossed it to Matthew.

"I don't want this," Matthew said as he instinctively caught it.

"Eat it," Hannibal ordered.

"What?"

"I need to prepare a meal for us."

"I have energy bars in my pack," Matthew said. "Water, too. For Will and I."

"Energy bars are not a meal," Hannibal said. "Now, we are in a strange world with strange food. I need to know that nothing I prepare is going to poison Will."

"But you're okay with poisoning me."

"Yes."

"A little bit won't hurt you," Will assured him.

"This dose makes the poison," Hannibal quoted in agreement.

"Spit it out if it doesn't taste good?"

"And let me know how it tastes," Hannibal instructed. "Bitter? Sour? Savory?"

“It’s raw,” Matthew pointed out.

“I just cut it off,” Hannibal argued. “That means it’s sashimi quality.”

Matthew brought the severed hand up to his lips, gingerly took a piece of the finger between his teeth and ripped off a bit. With a disgusted expression on his face, he chewed and swallowed.

“Rubber texture,” he said.

“That’s just because it’s raw,” Hannibal said.

“Yeah. Um, it tastes like chicken. No, pig.”

“Excellent,” Hannibal said. “We can have extra-long pig tonight. But Will here will need more than meat to sustain him. Look around and see if you see anything that looks edible. And do you have any salt in your pack?”

“No,” Matthew said. “Why would I have salt in my pack? I wasn’t planning to go camping!”

“One should always have salt on hand.”

“Do you have salt?”

“I had to leave in a hurry.”

Matthew stalked off to see what he could find. Despite the reassurances, he was fairly certain that even a little bit of the wrong thing could hurt him. But the alternative was to risk Will, and Matthew wouldn’t have been able to live with himself if something happened to him.

“What can I do?” Will asked.

“I need a couple of long, thin sticks that I can use as skewers. Flint rocks, unless Matthew has matches in his pack?”

“No!” Matthew called from the underbrush, where he was gingerly picking some mushrooms that he found.

“If you can’t find flint, any rock will do, and I’ll use the blade of the knife to get a spark. We’re also going to need a fire pit.”

“I can do that,” Will said. He set about for his task, while Hannibal marched over to Leuvis and laid a knife against his chest.

“The predator becomes the prey, is it?” Leuvis asked.

“Do you regularly eat humans?” Hannibal asked.

“Oh, yes!” Leuvis told him. He licked his lips. “But seldom such fresh meat as stands before me, although you are on the lean side.”

“The same could be said for you.”

Leuvis twisted in the bonds, but he was held fast. He had no doubt that he could escape or defend himself if absolutely necessary, but he felt more alive than he had in centuries. Finally, something had broken up the monotony of his life.

“Still, you taunt me, standing before me like this. How I would go for meat that isn’t jarred!”

Hannibal’s usual placid expression shifted to one of abject revulsion.

“You get your meat jarred?” he asked, as if he didn’t want to accept the grim horror of the reality.

“Sadly, it is so,” Leuvis conversed. “And you? When you eat humans, do you have them fresh?”

“I butcher them myself,” Hannibal told him.

Leuvis pulled his mouth wide in a twisted grin. “You are a peculiar one.”

“So I am told,” Hannibal said. “Now, Your Royal Highness. What can I take that won’t kill you?”

Leuvis scoffed. “You expect me to reveal a weakness to you so easily?”

“I merely do not wish to ruin you,” Hannibal said. “You are a source of unlimited meat.”

Leuvis blanched and then, to Hannibal’s surprise, he threw back his head and laughed. “You are interesting! Very well. Cut two thirds of the way down my abdomen. You like liver, yes?”

“An unappreciated delicacy,” Hannibal assured him.

Matthew was leery of straying too far from Will. They were in a strange place with monsters out of a nightmare. He didn’t trust that Leuvis was safe, no matter how bound up he was. And he definitely didn’t trust Hannibal Lecter, who wasn’t bound and who also still had his knife.

Thankfully, his experience as an orderly meant he had at least some idea what one should not eat, which meant he had a general idea of what might be edible. Of course, none of the plants and fungi were ones that he recognized, but had gathered a nice collection of mushrooms, leaves, flowers, and nuts.

These he took back to the methodical task of testing if they’re poisonous. A task that Hannibal repeatedly interrupted.

“Don’t forget to sort them by taste if they don’t kill you,” Hannibal instructed. “I don’t want to be cooking blind.”

Matthew scowled and began separating the “safe” pile into different categories. Of course, since he hadn’t tasted all of them yet, he didn’t entirely know what those categories were going to be. He decided to pay careful attention to how each taste, so that he could resort them as needed.

It was after he had chewed a tiny bit of leaf that he immediately spit out, relegating it to the “unsafe” pile that Hannibal unzipped his pack and began rummaging around in it. Matthew fumbled for his garroting wire, but Hannibal had already moved back to near the fire pit that Will was constructing. In his hand was one of the energy bars Matthew had brought with him.

“Those are for Will,” Matthew protested.

“Of course,” Hannibal said. “But as you neglected to pack salt, I need to use them to bread the liver. Which Will will be eating, of course.”

Leuvis watched curiously as Hannibal worked. He’d already healed from the injury Hannibal had given him to the gut, including regrowing his liver. Mentally, he tried to figure if he could pull his feet up over his head and use his claws to slice the rope if it came to that. He hoped it wouldn’t. The one called Hannibal fascinated him.

It wasn’t just that they really were from the human world, as he since deduced. It was that Hannibal ran the makeshift camp with such unconscious confidence and control. As Leuvis observed, he cut the liver into chunks on a cutting board he’d made from a strip of tree bark and then crumbled the energy bar, working the pieces into the meat. Then he went over to Matthew and inquired about the piles. Once Matthew explained how he’d divided them up, Hannibal selected several of the safe mushrooms. He alternated these with the breaded liver on the stick-skewers that Will had collected.

Once the fire pit was ready, Hannibal used a rock to create a spark against the fuel that Will had found. It was only a small ember at first, but Hannibal bent forward and blew gingerly on it until grew. Once he had it going, he positioned the skewers over it and allowed them to cook.

Now that, that was just good woodsmanship. But while the flames cooked the meat, Hannibal used the knife to peel some more of the bark off of a nearby tree. These he trimmed until they were plates. On these he placed some of the edible flowers and leaves. When the liver and mushrooms were done cooking, Hannibal slid them off onto the plates.

It was at this point that Leuvis realized that there were four plates.

“Is that one for me?” he asked.

“A feast fit for a prince, Your Royal Highness,” Hannibal assured him. He carried the plate over to where Leuvis hung.

Leuvis chuckled. His hands were bound, so Hannibal picked up each piece one by one and lifted them to Leuvis' mouth. At first, he was tempted to bite one of Hannibal's fingers, just to keep him on his toes, but at the first bite of the meal Hannibal had prepared, thoughts of that fled his mind.

"This is delicious!" he professed after the first bite.

"You have yourself to thank for much of that," Hannibal assured him.

Leuvis gave him an assessing look. "You are stranded in a strange place, and you have prepared such a delicacy!" he marveled. "Oh, how I'd love to know how you taste!"

Chapter 4

After everyone had eaten, Hannibal collected up the plates, wiped them down with some leaves, and stored them in Matthew's pack. By this point, night had properly fallen, and the humans huddled near the fire for warmth.

"We need to find a source of water tomorrow," Hannibal said. "Matthew's pack won't last us long."

"There is a river not far from here," Leuvis spoke up from where he was bound up.

"Yes, I know," Hannibal said. "I can smell it."

"If you follow that north, you will reach my estate," Leuvis said.

"Why would we want to go to your estate?" Will asked.

"Because we need to report that there was an unexpected gate. That's what you came through. And because from there, I can send you home."

"If you're delivered safely," Will added.

"Correct."

"Don't see why we should trust anyone who eats humans," Matthew remarked.

Leuvis nodded as best he could. "You three are protected by the Promise."

"You tried to eat me," Will pointed out.

"I did not realize you were from the human world," Leuvis said. "That was my error. I apologize."

"Tell me more about this Promise," Hannibal said.

"A thousand years ago, your world was split from ours. We have a population of humans that we breed for food, but we do not hunt humans. We especially do not hunt humans from the human world. You have my word as an archduke that you will be protected."

Matthew stifled a yawn. "For now, we need to get some sleep." He addressed Will directly. "I don't trust the monsters. I can keep first watch and wake you in the night."

"Don't know how I'm going to sleep in these circumstances," Will said with nervous chuckle.

"Here," Matthew said. "Lay down. I'll help you relax."

Will lay on the ground by the fire, using his arm as a pillow. Matthew squatted beside him and began to gently massage Will's shoulders, bending awkwardly to reach the one that was against the ground.

"Mmm…" Will murmured, exhaustion catching up with him.

"Ow!" Matthew cried, as Hannibal shoved him to the side. The man could move silently when he wanted to.

Hannibal dropped down on the ground behind Will, wrapping his arms around Will's midsection and nuzzling his face in the back of Will's hair.

"Mmm…" Will murmured again, drifting completely off to sleep.

Matthew brushed himself off and stalked in a circle around the camp, less to keep watch than to blow off steam.

"You could garrot him in his sleep," Leuvis suggested quietly as Matthew passed him.

"I could!" Matthew retorted. Then he continued, "I could, but Will seems to like him now."

"That's new?"

"I'm not giving the enemy information," Matthew told him.

"But it would make Will sad if you harmed Hannibal?" Leuvis pressed.

"You should get some sleep, too," Matthew said.

He gave the sleeping Hannibal another look. He still had the knife. It was resting under his hand. Matthew didn't think he could get it without stepping on Will or the fire.

The forest cover was too heavy for Matthew to watch the moon, and he obviously wasn't getting cellphone service, but his phone still had battery power. He used the stopwatch feature to start counting. When six long hours had passed, he gently woke Will. Of course, this woke Hannibal at the same time, and Matthew quickly moved back as Hannibal's grip tightened on the knife.

"I'm going to get some sleep," Matthew told Will. "Wake me in the morning, okay?"

Then Matthew laid down and let sleep take him.

Will threw another log on the fire as the night dragged on. He looked up to see Hannibal staring at Matthew. Will went over to him.

"Are you jealous?" Will asked.

"Yes."

"Are you going to slit his throat in front of me?"

"I am considering it, yes."

"Matthew is a friend."

"He clearly has more than *friendship* in mind."

"I'm going to go get some more firewood," Will said abruptly. He walked toward the edge of the camp, passing the full stack of firewood that was already there from when he'd gathered it earlier.

"There is trouble in paradise," Leuvis commented with a laugh.

"It does not concern you," Hannibal told him.

Leuvis was silent for a few minutes, but then he spoke up again. At first, Hannibal did not know if the topic had changed.

"Five hundred years ago, there was a defector of the Ratri Clan."

"Who are the Ratri Clan?"

"They are the humans who oversee the Promise. But one objected. His name was Henry Ratri, and I was tasked with dealing with him."

"Did you?"

Leuvis did his best to nod. "I tracked him to one of the farms, and he fled." Hannibal got the sense that Leuvis was scowling then, although it was hard to tell with his mask. "While going down a flight of stairs with me in pursuit, he stumbled and twisted his ankle. He lost his grip on his weapon, as well."

"Poor luck for him."

"Poor luck for me," Leuvis corrected.

"Yet here you are. I assumed everything worked out."

"It didn't," Leuvis said. "I was hoping for a fight, but here my enemy laid helpless, not due to my own prowess but due to an ill stroke of fate. I had to decide then."

"Baked or grilled, Your Royal Highness?"

"No, before that," Leuvis said. "I had to decide whether or not to let him go."

Hannibal's facial expression changed a miniscule amount, and the barest hints of confusion could be read there. "Letting him go hardly gets him on your dinner plate."

“Delayed gratification,” Leuvis explained. “If I’d let him go, he could have recovered. I could have tracked him later. We could have had a proper clash.”

“Which did you choose?”

“I killed him then and there,” Leuvis lamented. “I didn’t have to do that. But because I did that, I deprived myself of what I truly wanted.”

“I don’t struggle with such conundrums.”

“I can tell,” Leuvis said. He glanced over at the direction Will had gone off in. “But I wonder what it is that you truly want from him and what you’ll have to give up to get it?”

“I have what I want from Will,” Hannibal told him confidently. He leaned in close. “We killed together, him and I, right before we came to this place. He thought it was beautiful.”

“How was it that you came through the portal, then?” Leuvis asked curiously.

“Excuse me?”

“I saw the portal,” Leuvis said. “It opened in the sky. You would have come down through it. Were you falling?”

“That also does not concern you, Your Royal Highness,” Hannibal told him. He went to the far side of the fire, crouched down in front of it, and watched the logs within burn.

Chapter 5

When morning properly arrived, a bit after the sun had rose as it took time for the light to filter through the foliage, Hannibal put out the fire. He piled dirt on it, scatted the remaining firewood, and did his best to conceal that they had been there.

"We can get breakfast at the river," Hannibal declared. "Will, help me get His Royal Highness down."

Leuvis stumbled a bit when his feet were finally returned to the ground. He was still bound, but he was able to walk, with Hannibal keeping hold of the end of the rope with one hand while gripping the knife with the other.

When they reached the river, Hannibal set Matthew to taste testing once more. He got lucky, and the first flower he tried – which grew in abundance along the shore – proved to be edible. They ambled along the shore at a snail's pace, picking bunches of flowers and chewing on them as they progressed. Hannibal even gave some to Leuvis after briefly handing the rope to Will.

On the banks of the river, there was a break in the trees. It was both easy to navigate direction and to mark the passage of time. Matthew could thus tell that it was around three o'clock when Hannibal tried to kill him.

Will was holding Leuvis' leash at that moment. Matthew had been looking around for danger, but he couldn't watch the tree line and Hannibal at the same time. He didn't see Hannibal ready his attack, and he didn't have time react.

But Will did.

Dropping Leuvis' leash, he flung himself between the knife Hannibal was swinging and Matthew. Hannibal's eyes widened as he processed what was occurring. Momentum fought against control. He twisted the knife down, shifting its arc as he tried to pull it back. It sliced across Will's shoulder instead of his throat.

"Will!" Hannibal and Matthew both cried. Then Matthew shoved Hannibal to the side. Taking Will's uninjured arm, he lowered him to the ground. Matthew tore off his shirt and used his teeth rip off a strip to use as a makeshift bandage, as the last of the gauze he'd brought had been used by Hannibal to treat his own wounds. There was still disinfectant left, and he used that on not only the wound but on the bandage he'd made, hoping that this would prevent an infection.

"This will stop the bleeding," Matthew told him as he tied the bandage in place.

"Will…" Hannibal said.

"It's okay," Will said. "Not the first scar you've given me."

“But I did not intend this one.”

Matthew glared at Hannibal, but his glaring was interrupted by the coil of rope that had been binding Leuvis being thrown at his feet. Everyone looked up to the see the archduke standing near them, his mouth split widely into a grin. Without taking his eyes off of the demon, Matthew fumbled for his garroting wire.

“There’s no need for that,” Leuvis said.

“Why should we trust you?” Will asked.

“You entertain me,” Leuvis said. “Besides, you are protected by the Promise, as I have said.” He nodded at the rope. “And what other choice do you have? You will not bind me again.”

“You intend us no harm?” Hannibal asked.

Leuvis held up his hand in the gesture of a solemn vow. “I intend you no harm.”

Matthew watched Leuvis’ eyes as he spoke and then nodded. “He’s telling the truth,” he told Will.

“We couldn’t have kept him bound the whole way, anyway,” Hannibal said. “We’d hardly be able to march into His Royal Highness’ estate with him as our prisoner.”

“You could not have,” Leuvis said. “Although I admit to being curious what you would do.”

“Let’s be on our way then,” Hannibal said.

“Will you do me the pleasure of walking beside me?” Leuvis invited.

“As Your Royal Highness wishes,” Hannibal obliged.

“You’re not like other humans, are you?” Leuvis conversed as they continued on their journey.

“I am not,” Hannibal said. “Are you like others of your kind?”

“I flatter myself to think that I am not,” Leuvis said. “And I have been told, well, there are peculiarities allowed to the queen’s younger brother.”

“Such as?”

“Well, I’d be honored to have you in my kitchen. Not as an ingredient – although I won’t deny that I hunger to know what that brain of yours must taste like! – but as my chef. I have tasted what you have done on short notice after abruptly finding yourself in a strange forest. What you must be able to do with a proper selection of ingredients and the right equipment!”

“Wonders,” Hannibal boasted. “Although few in my world appreciate my palate, once they know of it. Why the brain in particular?”

“It is the tastiest part of a human,” Leuvis explained, “and the cleverer the human, the better the taste.”

“This must be where our species differ,” Hannibal said. “I have always been partial to the kidneys, no disparagement meant to the brain, of course. But then, I have feasted largely on the incurably stupid.” He smiled and licked his lips at the memory. “I did nearly get a taste of Will’s brains once.”

“He’s smart?” Leuvis asked.

“Fiendishly so!” Hannibal praised. “You should see the deductions he is capable of at a crime scene. Watching him work is a treat.”

“I have been away from the human world for some time,” Leuvis said, “but wouldn’t your actions run afoul the law in the land you come from?”

“I do not care as long as I have Will by my side,” Hannibal declared.

“How can he do his work and be by your side both?” Leuvis asked, confused.

Hannibal’s eyes flickered down. “But he chose me over his work. That’s what matters.”

“Do you value you him for the aspects of himself that you can take from him?” Leuvis asked.

“Is not the value of a relationship what the other will sacrifice for you?” Hannibal asked in response.

“You must be careful,” Leuvis warned, “that when you cage a songbird, you do not destroy its desire to sing.”

While Hannibal and Leuvis led the way, Matthew walked with Will behind. In addition to scanning for dangers from the forest and trying to keep an eye on Hannibal lest he launch another attack, Matthew hovered over Will, scanning him for weariness or fever.

“You saved my life,” he said. “Thank you.”

“Thanks for bandaging me up,” Will said.

“I’m still furious that bastard cut you,” Matthew said, “even if he was aiming for me. I should have kicked that bucket out from underneath him when I had the chance.”

Will was silent to that at first. Finally, he said, “My relationship with Hannibal is… complicated.”

“He hurt you,” Matthew said firmly. “There’s nothing complicated about that.”

“I hurt you,” Will pointed out.

“What do you mean?”

“When you were taste testing,” Will elaborated. “I told you that a little wouldn’t hurt. That was true only in a technical sense; we don’t know how much ‘too much’ would be. I twisted the truth to manipulate you.”

Matthew scoffed. “Will, I was an orderly. I know the dangers of sticking strange objects in one’s mouth. I acted as a taste tester because I wouldn’t be able to live with myself if anything happened to you.”

“But I’ve manipulated others,” Will said. His mouth twitched in something that almost but ultimately wasn’t a smile and so ended up in the territory of a grimace.

“Oh?” Matthew asked. “What did you do?”

“I put my hand on Chilton’s shoulder,” Will said. “Like a pet. That made the Great Red Dragon go after him.”

“I don’t follow,” Matthew said. “The Great Red Dragon went after Chilton because the Great Red Dragon chose to do so.”

“I manipulated you,” Will insisted, “when I sent you after Hannibal.”

“You were literally locked in a cage,” Matthew countered. “I went after Hannibal because I wanted you to like me.”

“That’s manipulation.”

“That’s basic human interaction.”

“I used you. I batted my eyelashes at you so you would do what I wanted.”

“You sell yourself short,” Matthew insisted. “Not just any man could bat his eyelashes at me and have me commit a homicide. I made my own choices.”

They walked in silence for a bit, and then Will said, “He’ll kill you.”

“Yeah, he doesn’t like to share your attention. But I have you to watch me when I sleep at night.”

Will nodded. “You trust me?”

“I’d rather die from trusting you than live not being able to do so,” Matthew said instantly. He nodded his head at Hannibal, who was deep in conversation with Leuvis up ahead. He took a deep breath and asked, “What do you see in him? I want to understand.”

Will thought before speaking. “He’s charismatic. I-” He paused before continuing. “I have trouble with social interactions. The fun of autism spectrum. Especially when I was younger.”

“And I’ll bet being queer doesn’t help,” Matthew added.

Will shook his head. “Nope. I told myself I was straight for a long time, since I’m attracted to women.”

“I think I see,” Matthew said. “Here’s this debonair gentleman who’s sooo sure of himself and sooo comfortable in his own skin.”

Will nodded. “And I fascinated him. And he loves me.”

“No,” Matthew said flatly.

“What?”

“He doesn’t love you. You don’t eviscerate someone you love.”

“He’s unhappy being apart from me,” Will said. “Isn’t that love?”

“No,” Matthew said. “That’s desire. Or yearning. Or call it what you want. But it’s not love. Love is a thing you do.” The way Matthew said it made it clear he wouldn’t be deterred on his opinion the subject.

Chapter 6

It took three days to reach Leuvis' castle. Matthew and Will slept in shifts so that one could always keep watch. Leuvis offered to keep one of the watches himself – and Matthew noted that he felt that watches were necessary – but Matthew didn't trust Leuvis enough to accept the offer.

When the estate came into view, so did the soldiers. It was immediately obvious that Leuvis' claim to be an archduke was a completely honest one.

"It's all right," Leuvis called to them as they approached. "I need to speak with my regal sister."

The demon soldiers continued to give the three humans curious looks – and some were outright drooling – but it was clear that even if they saw them as food, they did not dare contradict Leuvis. In the forest, Hannibal had been in charge, but as they reached the estate, it was clear that they were all regarded as being part of Leuvis' sphere.

"These humans are under my protection," Leuvis informed the staff at the estate. "They are to be fed, bathed, and given medical attention.

"They look delicious," one of the staff muttered, but not so quietly that Leuvis didn't hear.

"They are mine," Leuvis said firmly.

Matthew took hold of Will's arm as the staff descended on them, to ensure that they wouldn't be separate. Hannibal glared at any of the staff who got too close to his person, and he still held the knife in his grip, as Leuvis had given no orders for them to be disarmed.

They were led to a large bathing room. One part looked like a locker room with showers, and then there was a large pool further in with steam coming off of it.

"It's an *onsen*," Hannibal explained. "We shower off here and then when we are clean, we go soak in the hot springs."

After three days of traveling through the forest, all three men were grimy and, in two cases, covered in blood. Luckily, in the days of travel, their wounds had ceased bleeding freely. They stripped naked except for the garroting wire (which Matthew kept hold off) and the knife (which Hannibal hadn't yet released his grip on). Once they had scrubbed all the grime off of themselves, they slipped into the hot springs, which felt absolutely heavenly.

When they had finished soaking, they climbed out of the pool to discover that new, clean clothes had been laid out for them. After dressing, they were whisked off to the infirmary where a demon looked them over to make sure all their wounds were healing properly. This was followed by a dinner. Matthew didn't question what he was eating; the important thing is that they weren't on the menu.

Leuvis found them after they had eaten.

“My sister will be coming to speak with you in the morning,” he said. “For now, I’ll have you shown to your rooms.” He clapped, and a servant appeared.

They followed them to a hall with three rooms off of it. Hannibal opened the first one, and it showed a room suitable for humans. The other doors revealed the same.

“These are kept for when the Ratri Clan visits,” the servant explained. “It is rare for Leuvis to have human guests that are not them.”

“I’d rather not sleep alone,” Matthew muttered to Will. “Best if we keep shifts.”

Will nodded, opened the second door, and Matthew followed him in just as Hannibal went to take the first door. When he saw what had happened, he abandoned the first room to follow the other two into their chosen room. The bed inside was large enough to comfortably sleep two, but it was still felt crowded with all of them inside.

“I had hoped to apologize to Will tonight,” Hannibal said once they were all inside.

“Apologize away,” Matthew said. To Will he asked, “Would you like to take first shift or second?”

“I’ll take first,” Will said.

“We’ll endeavor not to make too much noise,” Hannibal promised.

Matthew nodded, crawled to the far side of the bed, and fell asleep. He didn’t know how long he slept, but when he awoke, it wasn’t all at once. He drifted in and out of consciousness, and as he slowly came to, it seeped into his tired brain that Will and Hannibal were arguing.

“This was supposed to end!” Will cried.

“You and I, in each other’s arms, over a cliff,” Hannibal said. He was calmer than Will. “It was not an end I regretted because it was with you.”

“You twist me,” Will said, going quieter again, so that Matthew almost missed his words. “I orbit you like the moon around the earth.”

“The earth would be lonely without the moon.”

“But the tides I pull wreck ships,” Will said. “You wreck ships.”

“What wrong with wrecking ships?” Hannibal asked.

“I don’t like it.”

“You enjoy it.”

“I do not like that I enjoy it. I do not like the person you have helped me to become.”

“It is who you are.”

“And I’m not denying that. But Hannibal, what are we going to do when we get back to our world?”

“We could kill and eat Matthew.”

“No,” Will said. “That will only be one more person that you’ve taken from me.”

“Will you turn me into Jack then? See me behind bars when you are as guilty as I?”

“No,” Will said. “I wouldn’t be able to bear to see you caged. Not now.”

“Then what are we to do?”

“I don’t know,” Will said. “But we should get some sleep. I’ll wake Matthew.”

Matthew felt Will’s hand on his shoulder, which jostled him completely to wakefulness. Matthew looked at Will sleepily as Will stepped back.

“Your clothes are on inside out,” Matthew said at last. “They weren’t that way before.” Hannibal chuckled and smirked at that. Hastily, Will disrobed, switched his clothes the right way, and then put them back on. Then he climbed into bed, taking the spot Matthew had been in. Hannibal slipped into the bed next to him and wrapped Will in his arms.

When morning came, a servant knocked on the door. They held fresh changes of clothing for them to change into, including a belt for Hannibal to strap his pilfered knife to. They were allowed to bathe and eat breakfast. When they were done, Leuvis himself appeared to inform them at that they would be having an audience with his sister, Queen Legravalima.

In the audience chamber, they were led before her. Hannibal promptly knelt and inclined his head politely. Matthew awkwardly stuck out his hand. Will did not move but only stared up at her.

“She’s beautiful,” he whispered. “I want her to step on me.”

The queen heard and chuckled. She turned to her brother, who had come to stand beside her. “Your humans do not have proper court manners,” she remarked. “But the flattery is appreciated.”

Hannibal glanced around without moving, which was when he saw that all of the demon subjects had prostrated themselves rather than kneel. He glowered at the floor, annoyed with himself for having a committed a faux pas.

“They do not know better,” Leuvis assured her. “They are from the human world.”

“The one on the right is trying,” Queen Legravalima remarked. The one on the right was Hannibal, and he was mollified by her remarks. “You may rise,” she said grandly. Hannibal stood up, and Matthew withdrew his hand.

“We need a way home,” Matthew said, “um, O Queenly One.” On the other side of Will, he saw Hannibal wince out of the corner of his eye.

“My brother will accompany you to Epsilon Farm,” Queen Legravalima stated. “There is a gate there that can take you home. You are dismissed.”

Servants escorted them out of the hall, and Leuvis joined them half an hour later.

“Why is it that Your Royal Highness is undertaking this task?” Hannibal inquired after he had arrived.

“It isn’t much concern to you, but my sister suspects that Epsilon Farm is responsible for the disturbance that brought you here. In escorting you home, I can investigate their activities.”

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Leuvis led Hannibal, Will, and Matthew to one of the exits of the estate, where a car was waiting. It was a large car by human standards, as it was obviously designed to comfortably fit demons. The driver opened the doors in the back for them to pile in and then drove them down the road.

Their destination was not Epsilon Farm itself but a train station, which was also oversized by human standards. They boarded the car they were directed to, and the train set off at a good speed. Not an hour had passed before the farm came into view.

It was clear as soon as they saw it that it wasn't yet fully operational. The great wall that encircled it was only partially complete, and the surroundings were littered with construction equipment. The train station didn't go all the way into the farm, stopping instead outside the walls, but there was another car waiting to take them across the bridge to the interior.

A demon wearing a white lab coat and carrying a clipboard met them when they were only a few feet inside the facility's core room. Hannibal looked around while the new demon greeted Leuvis and made hemming noises that served as an inquiry about the three humans that were in Leuvis' company.

Other than the central aisle, where they were now, the room was packed with machinery. Hannibal hadn't a clue what any of it did, but there were a great many flashing lights, glowing buttons, and beeping noises. With his hands behind his back, Hannibal ambled over to the nearest machine, trying to determine its purpose. All the writing on it was in a script that he couldn't understand, but there was a needle and gauge that was understandable enough. The needle was pushed far to the side, where the background the gauge was colored red instead of white.

"Technician," Leuvis said. "It is suspected that Epsilon Farm is causing disturbances in the divide between our world and the human world."

"Archduke," the technician responded. "That is quite impossible."

Hannibal moved to examine another machine. There was a fluid indicator with indents going up it. There were two black lines, one near the top, and the other near the bottom. The fluid was currently below the bottom line.

"Why don't you show me your work?" Leuvis pressed. "The safety of the realm is paramount."

"Everything is fine!" the technician whined, stamping his foot in a petulant temper.

Hannibal turned to look at another machine. There was something that looked like a pressure release valve. The cap was flipped open. Below this was a picture. While Hannibal could not read the accompanying words, the picture used arrows to indicate that the cap should remain closed.

"If everything is fine," Leuvis said, "there should be no issue with us looking around."

Hannibal's sharp ears caught Matthew whisper to Will, "The technician's got to be someone important, if Leuvis is being this patient with him."

"Nepotism," Will guessed.

"I know what I'm doing!" the technician insisted.

"No, you don't," Hannibal said, turning from his unofficial inspection to address him properly. "Lord…?"

"Bayon," the demon responded icily. "My uncle is the head of the house."

"Called it," Will said quietly to Matthew.

Hannibal began pointing at the pieces of equipment. "This one's overheating. This one needs a fluid refill. And this cap is supposed to be closed."

Technician Bayon glared at him, but Leuvis' patience ran out then. "Shut down everything except the gate. I hope that at least that works as intended?"

There were a few more protests from Technician Bayon, which culminated in him going off to sulk, at which point an underling was set on the actual task of shutting everything down. Once Leuvis was confident that that was done, he led them down the hall toward the gate.

"I shall miss you," Leuvis said to Hannibal, as they stopped outside the room containing the gate. "You have brought me a great deal of entertainment."

Hannibal smiled. "I won't deny that this world fascinates me."

"You could stay," Will said softly.

"What?" Hannibal asked, surprised.

"You could stay here," Will said. "With Leuvis."

"I would have no objection to that," Leuvis said.

Hannibal stepped closer to Will and laid his hands on Will's shoulders. "It would mean that I would never have you in my sight again."

“But you’d be safe,” Will said. He laid one of his hands on Hannibal’s and gently squeezed it.

“And everything is not fine,” Hannibal admitted, recent memories of the technician’s protests playing in the back of his mind.

Will twisted his lips in something that was half grin, half grimace. “I’d just have to find another cliff to throw us off of.”

“But here I can have everything,” Hannibal said, “except you.”

“I could never truly be what you wanted,” Will said. “Not really.”

“Because I want mutually exclusive things?” Hannibal asked.

“It’s who you are,” Will said.

Hannibal took the hand that Will wasn’t squeezing and laid it against Will’s cheek. Then he leaned forward and pressed their foreheads together. “I wish things could have been different.”

“Me, too,” Will whispered.

With reluctance, Hannibal let go of Will and stepped back. Will let his hand linger on Hannibal’s until he was forced to let go. Hannibal turned to Matthew. Drawing the knife, he pointed it at Matthew’s heart.

“Take care of him,” he ordered.

“I will,” Matthew said. Nodding, Hannibal changed his grip on the knife and handed it to Matthew hilt first.

They went into the room where the gate was. It looked like an elevator. Matthew and Will went inside. Hannibal watched Will disappear from his world as the doors closed. Leuvis draped an arm around his shoulder, giving him a side hug. Bending down, he kissed the top of his head. Reaching up, Hannibal laid a hand on top of Leuvis’.

“Thank you,” Hannibal said. Then he swallowed his grief and heartbreak and looked up at the archduke. “Who do you want for lunch?”

The elevator dinged open. When Will and Matthew stepped out, they were standing in a field somewhere. There was a farmhouse in the distance. Once they were clear of the door, the elevator shut behind them, and when they turned to look at it, it had disappeared.

“At least it didn’t drop us off where we left from,” Matthew said. “Well, let’s go.”

At the farmhouse, they were able to call a taxi, as well as Jack. He promised to get Molly and Walter home safely, now that the Great Red Dragon and Hannibal were both gone.

The story Will had given Jack, while not a lie, was an abbreviation of the truth. He said only that he and Hannibal had killed the Great Red Dragon in self-defense and that Will had then sent Hannibal over the edge of the cliff. Jack didn't think to ask where they were calling from, only the location of Hannibal's get away property and if he needed help getting home, so further explanations were unnecessary.

When Will and Matthew finally arrived at the Graham residence, the door was flung open, and Molly rushed out. It was late, so presumably Walter was asleep.

Molly threw her arms around both of them. "Oh, thank goodness!" she cried. "You're both safe!"

"Both?" Will asked, confused.

At the same time, Matthew said, "Hello, Molly."

"Matthew came to visit me before," Molly explained. "He's been wanting us to all sit down together."

They went inside and over late-night coffee, Will and Matthew told her the whole truth of what had transpired. It was quite a lot for her to process.

After Will and Matthew had finished their story, Molly sat back.

"I know," Will said. "The demons are a lot to take in."

"No, the demons I can do," Molly said. "It's you running off with Hannibal Lecter that I'm having trouble with."

"I'm sorry," Will said.

"What were you thinking?"

"That I wasn't coming back."

"Why did you?" Molly asked. "Do you even love me?"

"It was Matthew," Will said, "And yes."

"But you love Hannibal Lecter more?"

Will shook his head. "I couldn't love Hannibal." Molly looked at him in confusion, so Will tried to clarify. "Love is a thing you do. I couldn't have had a relationship with Hannibal. It wouldn't have worked."

"Does that make me the runner up?" Molly asked.

"No," Will said. "It's about what you have, and he doesn't."

"And Matthew?" Molly asked. "Is he someone you want in your life, too?"

Will took Molly's hands in his own. "Molly, I swear that I will never stray again."

"Will, that's good to hear, but that's not the question I asked."

"Then yes," Will said. Next to him, Matthew's face broke out in a grin.

"Alright," Molly said.

"Alright?" Will said. "I haven't been-" He grin-grimaced again. "-I haven't been a very good husband."

"No," Molly agreed, "you haven't. But when I said 'for better or worse' and "til death do we part', I meant it. Didn't you?"

Will nodded. "I did."

"Then alright. Hannibal's in a different dimension, so I can put him out of my mind, even if he's not in the other world I prefer. And I'm willing to give a poly relationship with Matthew a go. After all, he brought you back to me."

Chapter End Notes

In case you're wondering, yes, this does mean that three decades later, Hannibal very briefly becomes co-consort of the demon world before Leuvis abdicates.

Anyway, thank you for reading!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!